

DCFS Advisory Committee and Stakeholders Meeting August 23, 2006

Board Members Present: Connie Tanner, Dean Burbank, Howard Turney, Rich Huddleston with Jennifer Ferguson, Sherri Jo McLemore, Gary Ewart

Board Members Absent: Benny Gooden, Carla Reyes, Dana McClain, Jerry Walsh, John Smith, Johnny Key, June Lang, Paul Kelly, Rose Warfield-McGill, Stephanie Hammett, Tiffany Waters, Diane Robinson, Jerry Jones, Joyce Warren, Bruce Cohen, Sherry Mangrum, Consevella James, David Tindall, Karen Worley, June Simpson, Yvette Murphy, Debra Hurd

DCFS/DHHS Staff Present: Roy Kindle, Cecile Blucker, Pat Page, Rosemary White, Janie Huddleston, Mona Davis, Christina Lynn, Debbie Shiell, Miranda Raines, Alicen Bennett, Kim Alexander, Debbie Roark, Sheryl Alexander, Melissa Singleton, Charles Hicks, Rose Bates, Elaine Jackson, Tonya Tackett

Others in Attendance: Charlotte Tubbs with the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Kindle welcomed the Board members and asked for introductions from those attending.

Review of Minutes

Rosemary White discussed staffing issues and provided several supporting documents including the DCFS Position Control Field Staff Summary Report. Ms. White reviewed in detail the positions of filled and unfilled workers. It was stressed that hiring and interviewing continues and that the positions of leadership have been filled in Areas 7, 9 and 2. A list of job fairs was distributed, and notice was made that DCFS is entering classrooms to recruit. An invitation was extended to Board members wanting to participate. DCFS Family Service Worker Caseload reports by Home Area/County and Adoption Specialist Caseload by Last Name of the Supervisor for the most current month (July) were distributed. Connie Tanner asked about a report on staffing levels on worker retention, by years of service by type of position.

Ms. Tanner said that she feels there are losses in employees as fast as DCFS is hiring, and she wants to know what areas are losing staff and why. Mr. Kindle said that would be something we would have to do manually since CHRIS does not capture. Ms. Tanner asked Tonya Tackett about staffing particulars. Ms. Tackett said she had talked to Judge Warren about our wish to involve the judges and asked Ms. Tanner to suggest ways to involve the judges.

Ms. White said efforts will be made for a Judges meeting. Exit information for 2005 and years of experience to current would be made available. Ms. White said supervisors/worker relationships are being worked on.

Mr. Kindle said that Levels of Competency are being addressed and will likely be ready in a printed format before the next board meeting. Supervisory skills are being worked on and given special attention. Rich Huddleston asked about salary increase feasibility for workers, and Mr. Kindle said he and the executive staff are working towards that end before the biennium. Pat said that a Worker Recruitment and Retention Committee already exists. Debbie Shiell stated that various methods are being used to retain workers (e.g., worker meetings and idea exchanges, skills evaluation, weekly meetings to discuss needs and address questions). Ms. White said that the caseload report that was handed out during the meeting contained a lot of related information.

Ms. White stated that the Compliance Outcome Report – COR (Statewide Area) expounds on breakdowns. The data contained in this report comes from entries in the CHRIS system. Workers are encouraged to document all case details. Travel and subsequent Tr-1's are linked to CHRIS entries. Connie said that she did not believe workers were meeting with families and children as often as needed. Sheryl Alexander said in fact that the policy is for weekly face-to-face meetings for the first month of service. Ms. Tanner said that her concerns were only that monthly in-the-home visits are being made. Ms. White stressed that supervisory case reviews are done to ensure no deficiencies. Gary Ewart said documentation issues are being addressed and that the children are being seen. Ms. White said laptops should facilitate documentation. Dean Burbank said signatures of Foster Parents or child would serve as documentation. Mr. Burbank said, as a FP himself, that we shouldn't make paperwork a burden if as signature as proof is all that is necessary. Sheryl clarified policy relating to home visits. Mr. Kindle said that the numbers are currently incorrect because workers are making more visits than they are documenting. Staff are being sent out to key the information to facilitate backload entries. Janie Huddleston said she thought that Ms. Tanner had offered to help the worker by devising a form of simple documentation. Ms. Page said that during the Assessment of Systems for Best Case Practice Initiatives Supervisors told us that visits are happening but not recorded. She said that during the meeting in Dallas with the feds last week that she brought up the idea of ways to "simply" document these visits. Ms. Huddleston said that DCFS could count on her for data entry assistance.

Ms. White reviewed Foster Care staffing information, health screenings and weekly and monthly compliance, visits. Ms. Singleton said that it is not a staffing fault regarding court date compliance and there was an agreement per Mr. Kindle that they would meet later and discuss attorneys being the holdup in court date compliance issues.

Cecile Blucker said July and August have been a busy month. Budgets and P card use are in place. Currently there are 500 P cards in the field, and the first month bills have been reviewed. DCFS has been very happy with results so far and the use of P cards is making it easier for workers to make necessary purchases. Work has been geared towards ordering equipment for new hires and the new PPES. There is a September 30 deadline for PPEs. The new PPE's are not a Clip focused process. We are constantly shifting dollars as necessary for residential facilities, etc. The IV-E review is not complete but the reviewers should be back next week to QA cases.

Mr. Kindle said the new PPEs incorporates the Supervisory Review Tool into PPE process. Mr. Kindle said he would share a little bit about the budget. There is \$106.7 million 2007 budget request which additional, \$10.2 million in 1st year GR, and \$15.8 million 2nd year GR 2nd. We are working toward 1 to 15 staffing ratio. We are working toward getting an assist team so we won't have to shift people from area to area as we have in the past. This will assist in the worker retention process. Contracts - we will be asking for more slots in treatment and shelters and additional beds. Board payments may increase. Adoption Subsidies become part of fixed costs for next year, plus mileage is now 42 cents as of 15th of this month. Mr. Kindle stated that the equipment and staffing cost of 24 hour CHRIS access will be also be considered. Mr. Huddleston said that "Advocates" will assist in voting for increase in our budget. Ms. Tanner asked for a subcommittee for Judges to speak for kids (use CASA, etc) and start now before budget hearings. Ms. Tanner said money for drug-addicted parents is needed. Mr. Kindle agreed

Pat distributed a CFSR data sheet and discussed the areas on review within that year – the composites and weights and safety outcome. We hope to get started this fall, looking at data and getting our IT people to run data.

Ms. Tanner said collaboration was great and Arkansas is known for "playing well with others". Pat said the Advisory Committee was asked to be involved in CFSR Family Team Meetings (handouts distributed) to find out what Arkansas needed. A procedure was developed to hold Family Team Meetings – which take a lot of work to coordinate schedules and expectations. Case plans varied and the staffing situation in Sebastian County was difficult. The time involved in these meetings is massive and skill is needed to deal with various issues. Parent counsel, ad litem and OCC were great. Evaluations will be sent to the board as soon as possible. This should be a service supplied to the workers. A grant was written to expand the Family Team Meetings (not statewide but in 4 or 5 areas).

DCFS Assessment of Systems for Best Case Practice Draft Executive Summary, Draft Summary by Issue, Draft Excerpt (in color), and Sample Area Data Analysis and Summary were handed to the Board.

Sheryl did a presentation on Family Services Needs and Risk Assessment – workers will be able to access and make corrections and add as needed. This process must be done before case is closed. Ms. McLemore asked which individuals would be involved in each case, and Sheryl added that questions are designed to engage family for individual input. Mr. Kindle said interaction drives the Case Plan. Ms. Tanner asked that the Case Plan Tool be shared with the judges.

Ms. Ferguson handed out a publication entitled “A Long Road Ahead: An Update on the Arkansas Child Welfare System”. She noted that improvement on staffing alone won’t solve the crises and was glad to hear Mr. Kindle addressing all the needs and issues (equipment and procedures). Mr. Huddleston added that, regarding the list of needs presented, he was encouraged that DCFS was addressing most of them and that those not currently being addressed were being held open for discussion at future meetings.

Mr. Kindle said talking points on financial issues will be sent out and thanked the Board for coming. Ms. Tanner asked if Social Security was being tapped.

Connie said Child Support and Social Security should be tapped. Ms. Singleton said that it definitely has been.

Pat said that the Worker Retention Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18th.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the DCFS Advisory Board will be Tuesday, October 17th from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. The meeting will be held in the Arkansas River Room on the third (3rd) floor of the Main Street Mall, located on the corner of Main and Capitol Street, Little Rock, AR.